



State of Connecticut

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Statement in Support of HB 5332

Distinguished members of the Planning and Development committee, thank you for raising HB 5332. Similar to the preservation of small airport legislation this body passed several years ago, we again find ourselves at a junction that if we don't act today, we can't turn the clock back tomorrow.

Public Golf courses not only provide a beautiful green open space canvas in our communities but a place for over 400,000 golf enthusiasts to gather, enjoy the outdoors, get a little exercise and maybe vent a little frustration by hitting a little white ball.

In all seriousness, the public golf courses in Connecticut are at an extreme disadvantage as compared to municipal owned golf courses. Municipal courses pay no personal property taxes, no state taxes on season passes, no sales and use taxes and no income tax on any profits.

The swift pen of an assessor can put a golf course out of business in a day. Imagine that if a course owner wanted to improve the course by making a mound, or watercourse or even planting trees. An assessor can (and has) increased the value of the land, sometimes at \$150,000 per hole. Incredulous if you ask me. I support a statewide initiative that would tax the courses (land) as open space. Obviously any improvements to the clubhouse, parking lot etc. should be appraised as a real property increase for improvements, but not the course.

If we don't act today, the course owners must continue this fight every four years at revaluation time. At some point, a course owner may think, it's not worth the fight and sell the hundreds of acres of open space to a developer. I experienced this first hand when the Canton Public Golf course was sold to a developer and the former beautiful green landscape was replaced with the Shoppes at Farmington Valley.

I ask for your support in this very important piece of legislation.